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**| RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## **The Influence of Cartoons on Children’s English Language Use and Development in Kenema City, Sierra Leone**

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**| ABSTRACT**

This study, which was done in Kenema City, Sierra Leone, examined the influence of cartoons on children’s English Language use and development. It suggests that children watch cartoons and, as a result, they are able to learn vocabulary or new words in the English Language through television, newspapers, magazines, and books. The study also revealed that children are interested in toys and costumes; learn lessons about “Love” and “Honesty,”; and learn the English Language from common channels such as channel XYZ TV, Video Cassette, Cine Plus, and GTV. The study further revealed that fighting and ways of speaking the English Language, together with the use of new vocabulary and dress codes, are some of the values of cartoons.

**| KEYWORDS**

“Love”, “Honesty,” Cartoon, Innovation, Language, Promoting and Research.

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**1. Introduction**

This study was on how the watching of cartoons influences children’s English Language use and development and how it promotes research. ‘To promote’ means to help something to happen or develop “something”, Hornby A.S. (2007), while ‘research’ means an investigation, exploration, examination, study, inquiry, scrutiny, to search, to examine with continued care to make an extensive investigation into something, [http://wiktionary.org/livio\(javak6@gmail.com\)](http://wiktionary.org/livio(javak6@gmail.com)) and innovation refer to the introduction of something new, in customs, rites, etc.

Innovation also means a change in customs; established customs, manners, or rites (Ibid). A cartoon means a humorous drawing, often with a caption, a drawing satirizing current public figures, caricatures, etc., or in the same place (ibid).

In Kenema City, the lifestyle of children is changing rapidly day-by-day due to technological advancement than it was during the rebel war when parents monitored their children. After the war, there has been a rapid increase in technology with a sudden increase in the production of devices: videos, televisions, mobile phones, all of different designs and types. All these devices continue to be sources where children connect themselves to watching cartoons. This has had direct effects on the child’s physical, mental and psychological disposition. Children nowadays find the use of such devices as a means of entertainment for themselves, thus promoting violence to some extent, even though the language is acquired in the form of improving the children’s knowledge in learning new vocabulary, by which they acquire language as they keep on using television, [www.sienajournals.com](http://www.sienajournals.com).

Grolier (1985) states that if you ever watched someone looking at a magazine or a newspaper, it is cartoons that are first looked at before reading about stories because they smile or frown at the cartoons that they see. Also, cartoons are usually entertaining, and because it takes only a moment to look at them, they are read by not only children but by everyone.

Thus, cartoonists know that just about every reader of the publication in which their work is printed will react to their message, cartoons may make us laugh, but they can also make us think about important matters.

The history of cartoons emphasizes that the founder of the modern cartoon was the English Artist William Hogarth (1697 – 1764). Hogarth was interested in human nature – in the character and attitudes of people. His drawings ridiculed drunkenness, the stupidity of spoiled youngsters, the custom of parents arranging marriages for their children, and crooked elections (Grolier, 1985).

Thomas Rowlandson (1756 – 1827), another English Artist, worked mainly in etching – prints made from drawings that have been etched (burned with acid) into copper. His cartoons were printed in large quantities and sent all over England. They were fancy and humorous, and they exaggerated human features to make people look ridiculous (Grolier, 1985).

In the same way, [www.worldbook.com](http://www.worldbook.com) highlights that people throughout the world enjoy cartoons. Cartoons are animated motion pictures in movie theaters and on televisions, in comic strips and comic books, in advertisements, and in a wide variety of merchandise. Cartoons are particularly popular in children's entertainment; children respond to cartoons and are able to recognize them and produce their own simple cartoons at an early age.

Kinds of cartoons children watch include editorial cartoons, single panel cartoons, illustration cartoons, and advertising cartoons. Editorial cartoons indicate in pictures what editorials do in words. An editorial cartoon encourages a reader to develop an opinion about someone or something prominent in the news. Single panel cartoons, like editorial cartoons, have been popular in magazines after most editorial cartoons had migrated to newspapers - the scenes are illustrated in lines in these types of cartoons, whereas illustration cartoons are an important part of children's book illustrations. They are used for lighter works such as collections of jokes or humorous stories. And advertising cartoons make frequent use of the cartoon's ability to clarify the messages of the service or product being sold ([www.worldbook.com](http://www.worldbook.com)).

This study focused on "what is the best cartoon to learn the English Language." Studies identify the 13 best cartoons to learn the English Language, among which are:

- "Martha speaks" What it is: a dog that learns how to speak after eating some alphabet soup...
- "Postcards from Buster..."
- "Adventure Time"...
- "Regular Show"...
- "Dexter's Laboratory"...
- "Phineas and Ferb"...
- "Inspector Gadget"...
- "Teen Titans" or "Young Justice"...
- "And other superhero shows"...

It was noted further that "you can use children's cartoons for learning the English Language as well as other shows or movies; from them, bright colours, tons of action, animation, upbeat music, tons of humour sounds, like in some English cartoons are observed," ([@q=cartoon language..."\).](http://google.com/search? Source=hp@eu=c zmxerQmmxwaii ova)

However, positive effects, as well as negative effects, are usefully identified when children watch movies and television containing cartoons, leading to behaviour changes in them. Children acquire language from cartoons. They usually exhibit aggressive behaviour when they watch cartoons. Cartoon contents affect children when they acquire moral behaviour and social values. Cartoons lead children to extend violent behaviour to their siblings. Children imitate the behavior patterns of others through cartoons, and so parents must monitor their children as they watch cartoons, Machado, J.M (1980).

This study investigated the role research and innovation play in identifying the effectiveness of children's watching cartoons. The child is a special combination of inherent traits, whose growing language skill is a useful tool for satisfying needs and exchanging thoughts, hopes and dreams with others. The natural capacity of a child to categorize, invent and remember information aids that child's language acquisition. Thus, language is a system of intentional communication through sounds, signs (gestures), or symbols that are understandable to others; and communication as a broader term refers to the giving and/or receiving information, signals, or messages, Machado, J.M (1980). Machado highlights that "language is quintessentially or typically human: we use spoken language every day, face-to-face, as a means of communication, and written language allows us to record and hold on to our history across generations". "Language itself is very complex; it has a sound system that allows us to use numerous distinct words, a vocabulary of some 50,000,000 terms for many adults, and a series of constructions for relating these words. Language allows us to express innumerable ideas, describe events, tell stories, recite poems, buy, sell or bargain in markets, administer legal systems,

make political speeches, and do the myriad other activities that make up the societies we live in. Language allows us to coordinate what we do with others, relay information, find out answers, and carry out everyday activities-gossiping, making puns, writing memos, reading newspapers, learning histories, enjoying novels, greeting friends, telling stories, selling cars, reading instructions, the list is unending. The language calls for an intricate web of skills we usually take for granted. It is an integral part of everyday life that we rely on to convey wants and needs, thoughts, concerns and plans," Clark, Eve. E. (2003). The study focuses, therefore, on child's acquisition of language through cartoons.

Spencer, M (1985) notes that in normal situations, a person generally interprets the communication of others before responding to them and that young children vary in their ability to listen. Thus, Listening ability in children can be appreciative, purposeful, discriminative, creative, and critical.

In terms of the children's ability to appreciate cartoons, Machado, J.M (1980) highlights that the listening process includes responding to stimuli involving their awareness or discrimination of what is being listened to, organizing the stimuli in a sequence including synthesizing and scanning, and understanding the meaning of what is being heard by classification, integration, and monitoring. Gokhman, Y (2015) reports that you can use children's cartons for learning\_English\_Language just as well as other shows or movies. Sometimes they are even better! Not all cartoons are for kids, either – "The Simpsons and Family Guy" might be cartoons, but they both contain a lot of violence and inappropriate jokes that are definitely not for children.

Even some cartoons that are for kids have several layers that can give them a completely different meaning when an adult watches them. For example, "Just This One Short Clip from Adventure Time" has themes of "marriage", "love", "loss," and "scary stalkers" (people who follow you everywhere). A child might find it silly, but an adult may think it's even disturbing!

Additionally, children listen to voice cartoons, thus enabling them to enunciate clearly; the shows are repetitive – they repeat words, phrases, and even whole sentence structures. Children's cartoons contain episodes drawn in unique styles that explain new English Language vocabulary about expeditions or voyages.

### 1..1 Purpose of the Study

Cartoon programmes continue to reflect societal events day by day on noticeboards, radios, newspapers, television, and books in Sierra Leone. Therefore, there is a need to survey the influence of cartoons on children's English Language use and development.

### 2. Method of Data Collection

A survey method was used to collect Data. Data was collected through questionnaires from children through their parents from different homes in order to have a reliable result.

The total number of respondents for the study was 100. The study area selected was Kenema City, where there is a constant supply of electricity. The data was simply expressed into tables, analyzed, and interpreted so as to draw a conclusion from the study. The focus of the study concerned the following:

- Frequency (duration) parents allow children to watch cartoons.
- Frequency (duration) children watch cartoons per day
- Sources from which children watch cartoons
- Things/Items children like most from cartoons
- Lessons children learn from cartoons
- School subjects children learn from cartoons
- Concerns (suggestions) after watching cartoons.

### 3. Presentation and Analysis of Data

**Table 1: Showing age ranges of children who watch cartoons**

Age ranges of children who watch cartoons	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1 – 5 years	18	18.0
6 – 10 years	34	34.0
11 – 16 years	16	16.0
17 – 21 years	32	32.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Table 1 shows the age ranges of children who watch cartoons. 34.0 percent are children ranging from 6 – 10 years, 32.0 percent are 17 – 21 years, 18.0 percent are between the age range 1 – 5 years, and 16.0 percent are children between the age range 11 – 16 years.

**Table 2: Duration for which parents allow their children to watch cartoons**

<b>Duration</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
30 minutes only	4	4.0
1 hour only	22	22.0
2 hours 30 minutes	25	25.0
2 hours only	20	20.0
more than 2 hours	29	29.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Table 2 shows the duration for which parents allow their children to watch cartoons. 29.0 percent of parents allow their children to watch cartoons for more than 2 hours, 25.0 percent for only two and a half hours, and 22.0 percent of all children to watch cartoons for 1 hour only.

**Table 3: Duration of children watching Cartoons**

<b>Duration children watch cartoons</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
half an hour only	25	25.0
1 hour only	24	24.0
2 hours only	22	22.0
more than 2 hours	29	29.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Table 3 shows the duration for which children watch cartoons. 29.0 percent of children watch cartoons for more than 2 hours, 25.0 percent watch cartoons for half an hour, 24.0 percent of children watch cartoons for 1 hour only, and 22.0 percent of children watch cartoons for 2 hours.

**Table 4: Sources from which children watch cartoons**

<b>Sources from which children watch cartoons</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
television (TV)	81	81.0
newspapers	13	13.0
magazines	4	4.0
books	2	2.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Table 4 shows the sources from which children watch cartoons. 81.0 percent of children watch cartoons on television, 13.0 children watch cartoons from newspapers, 4.0 children watch cartoons from magazines, and only 2.0 percent of children watch cartoons from books.

**Table 5: Things from cartoons that children like most**

<b>Things from cartoons children like most</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
food items	10	10.0
wedding gifts	11	11.0
toys	48	48.0
costumes	31	31.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Table 5 shows the things from cartoons that children like most. 48.0 percent of the respondents like toys most, closely followed by 31.0 percent who like costumes most, and only 11.0 and 10.0, respectively, like wedding gifts and food items.

**Table 6: Lessons which children learn from cartoons**

Lessons that children learn from cartoons	Frequency	Percentage (%)
honesty	29	29.0
sincerity	10	10.0
love	32	32.0
success	19	19.0
development	10	10.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Table 6 reveals that 32.0 percent of respondents showed that cartoons which they watch teach them lessons about love, 29.0 percent showed that cartoons teach them lessons about honesty, 19.0 percent showed that they learn lessons concerning success, while only 10.0% and 10.0% respectively responded that cartoons teach them lessons about development and sincerity.

**Table7: Whether or not children learn the English Language from watching cartoons.**

Whether or not children learn the English Language from watching Cartoons	Frequency	Percentage (%)
yes	80	80.0
no	20	20.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Table 7 Shows whether or not children learn the English Language from watching cartoons. Overwhelmingly, 80.0 percent of children reported that they learn the English Language from watching cartoons. Only 20 percent of children reported that they do not learn the English Language from watching cartoons.

**Table 8: The channels from which children watch cartoons**

Channels from which children watch cartoons	Frequency	Percentage (%)
TVXYZ	15	15.0
Video Cassette	21	21.0
Cine Plus	9	9.0
GTV	7	7.0
Joy Prime	5	5.0
Fox Crime TV	3	3.0
TV 3	6	6.0
Hungama TV	1	1.0
PBS Kids	1	1.0
Christ TV	1	1.0
Niclodeon TV	1	1.0
Discovery Kids	1	1.0
Channel 2127	1	1.0
Boom Rang TV	2	2.0
Cartoon Network	2	2.0
Kids TV	1	1.0
Galaxy TV	1	1.0
New Day TV	1	1.0
Pogo	1	1.0
Toonami TV	1	1.0

<b>Channel from which children watch cartoons</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Universal TV	1	1.0
Zee World	1	1.0
Disney XD	1	1.0
Maha Cartoon TV	1	1.0
Baby TV	1	1.0
African TV	1	1.0
Nick Jr. TV	1	1.0
Toon Cast TV	1	1.0
Power TV	1	1.0
Channel O. TV	3	3.0
Cannal TV	1	1.0
Disney TV	2	2.0
Animax TV	1	1.0
Teletoon Retro TV	2	2.0
Zee Q TV	1	1.0
Chutti TV	1	1.0
Soni TV	1	1.0
Teen Nick	1	1.0
The Hub TV	1	1.0
AYV TV	5	5.0
Wesleyan TV	1	1.0
Jetix TV	1	1.0
Kiddy Wins	1	1.0
<b>Total: 43 channels</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Table 8 shows 43 channels from which children watch cartoons. 21.0 percent of children watch cartoons on video cassettes, followed by 15.0 percent of children who watch cartoons from TVXYZ, cassettes, 9.0 percent from Cine Plus, 7.0 percent from GTV, and 6.0 percent from TV3, whereas 5.0 percent in each case watch cartoons from the Joy Prime and AYV TV. And from each of these ones, 3.0 percent of children reported that they watch cartoons on the channels: Fox Crime TV and channel “O” TV, but only 2.0 percent each watch cartoons on these channels: Boom Rang TV, Cartoon Network, Disney TV, and Teletoon Retro TV. Nonetheless, only 1.0 percent of children each reported that they watch cartoons from the other channels, as shown in the table.

**Table 9: What children learn about most from the cartoons they watch**

<b>What children learn about most from the cartoons they watch</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
English Language and other languages	35	35.0
fighting	34	34.0
fashion	14	14.0
behaviours and mannerisms	9	9.0
dressing	8	8.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Table 9 shows what children learn about most from the cartoons they watch. 35.0 percent of respondents reported that they learn about English Language and other languages too, while 34.0 percent reported that they learn about fighting when they watch cartoons, but only 14.0 percent of them said they learn about fashion, 9.0 percent reported that they learn about behaviours and mannerisms and 8.0 percent reported that they learn about dressing when they watch cartoons.

**4. Discussion of the findings**

Even though 18.0 percent of children within the age range 1 – 5 years reported that their parents allow them to watch cartoons, a larger proportion of children of 34.0 percent of parents reported that they allow their children to watch cartoons at ages ranging between 6 – 10 years, indicating that these children are a bit strong to sit down to watch cartoons for longer hours compared to the former, whereas between ages 11 – 16 years and 17 – 21 years, despite the fact that the responses were fairly higher, less interest might be given to watching cartoons because children at these ages are far older and might focus much more on school work such as completing an assignment, studying for exams or tests, and so on.

On the other hand, 29.0 percent of parents allow their children to watch cartoons for over two hours. This suggests that children need enough time to watch cartoons to learn different vocabularies or new words from fun cartoons, for example. The same percentage of 29.0 shown by parents holds for the children for watching cartoons (tables 3 and 4) because they too agreed with the view of their parents that indeed, they watch cartoons for more than 2 hours 30 minutes to enable them to articulate well in English and other languages.

A very high number of respondents, that is, 81.0 percent, reported that television is the major source from which children watch cartoons. Televisions enhance groups of children to gather together in their parlours to achieve their common goals or interests, including watching cartoons. Children also watch cartoons from newspapers, magazines, or books, despite the fact that the percentages, in this case, are not usually too high, as shown in Table 4.

The study further revealed that children like toys and costumes when they watch cartoons. This is indicated by 48.0 percent and 31.0 percent, respectively, in Table 5.

"Love" and "Honesty" ranked highest among the lessons children learn from watching cartoons (Table 6). It revealed that children categorize information leading to episodes, as in the case of "Martha speaks". Children also appreciate characteristics such as "sincerity", "success," and "development". From the study, fairly low percentages were given by children showing lessons they learn from cartoons: 10.0 percent, 10.0 percent, and 19.0 percent, respectively (table 6).

An overwhelming number of children reported that they learn English Language and other languages from watching cartoons. This is shown by 80.0 percent. However, this is evident in Gokhman Y (2015), "children's cartoons use words that are simple enough for low level English learners to understand, but also throw in plenty of challenging new words for more advanced learners". On the contrary, only 20.0 percent of children reported that they do not learn the English Language through watching cartoons (Table 7).

The study further revealed that Video Cassette, TV XYZ, Cine Plus, and GTV are the most common channels through which children learn cartoons. 21.0 percent of children reported that they watch cartoons through video cassettes, followed by 15.0 percent on XYZ TV channel, 9.0 percent on Cine Plus TV, and 7.0 percent on GTV TV. But fairly reasonable percentages were reported by children that they watch cartoons through other channels, including 6.0 percent through TV 3, 5.0 percent through AYV, and 5.0 through Joy Prime. The responses were relatively too low for a few children who varied their choices of channels (Table 8).

The study showed that children learn English Language and other languages the most. The report gives 35.0 percent for this, followed closely by 34.0 percent of children who reported that they learn about fighting most, but 14.0 percent said they learn about fashion most, 9.0 percent learn about behaviours and mannerisms most, and 8.0 percent learn about dressing most. (Table 9).

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study was carried out about the influence of cartons on children's English Language use and development in relation to research and innovation in promoting language through cartons. From the study, we can conclude that children watch cartoons and are able to learn vocabulary or new words in the English Language through television, newspapers, magazines, and books. Also, children are interested in toys and costumes and learn lessons about "love" and "Honesty," for which information is usually about different episodes on the one hand, while "sincerity," "success," and "development" often characterize some cartoons that they watch.

Through cartoons, children learn English Language and other languages. Channels like XYZ TV, Video Cassette, Cine Plus, and GTV are mostly used by children to watch cartoons, but other channels are used too.

From watching cartoons, fighting and ways of speaking English using new vocabulary, as well as the dress codes are copied by children.

Finally, children acquire values such as learning about phrases and words from cartoons, (Gokhman 2015).

